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CENTENNIAL.

THE AMERICAN NEGRO,

FROM 1776 TO 1876.

ORATION DELIVERED JULY 4, 1876,

AT AVONDALE, OHIO,

BY

REV. GEO. W. WILLIAMS.

"I will sing a new song which resounds in my breast; never was a song good or beautiful which resembled any other."—*D'Avvergne.*

CINCINNATI:
ROBERT CLARKE & CO., PRINTERS.

1876.

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"We die, but leave an influence behind us that survives. The echoes of our words are evermore repeated, and reflected along the ages. It is what man was that lives and acts after him. What he said sounds along the years like voices amid the mountain gorges; and what he did is repeated after him in ever-multiplying and never-ceasing reverberations."—*Cumming.*

"Our fathers to their graves have gone;
Their strife is past, their triumph won;
But sterner trials wait the race
Which rises in their honored place—
A moral warfare with the crime
And folly of an evil time."—*Whittier.*

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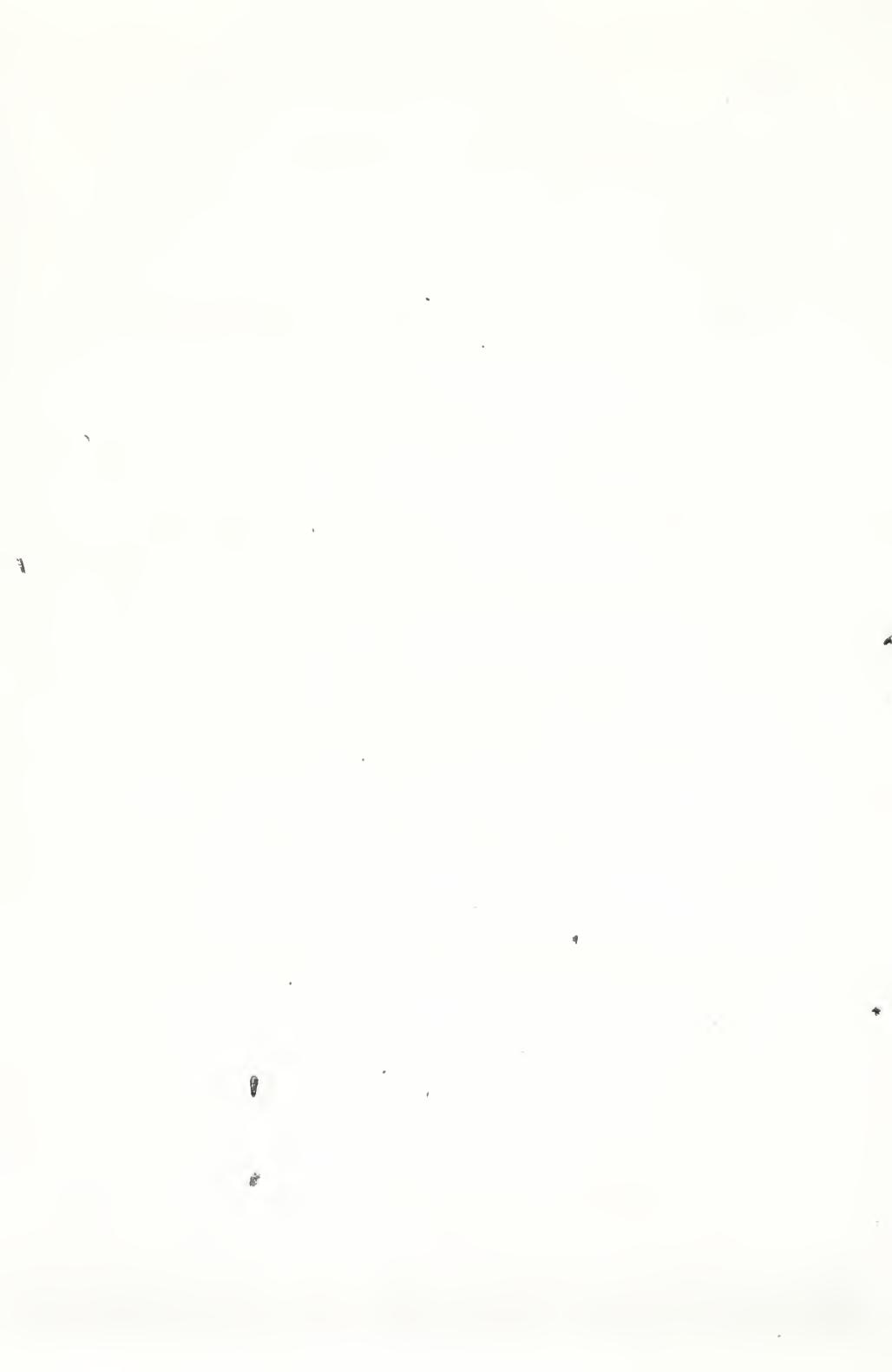
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P R E F A C E . .

The following oration was delivered at Avondale, on the Fourth of July. It was prepared hastily, and was not originally intended for publication; but by unanimous vote, at the conclusion of its delivery, it was ordered printed.

I very much regret that time forbids its revision; but, with all its imperfections I must send it to the public, with the hope that its pages will furnish some measure of instruction and pleasure, to my many friends who, judging its utterances wise, have urged its immediate publication.

G. W. W.

CINCINNATI, OHIO, *July 5, 1876.*



ORATION.

THE AMERICAN NEGRO,

FROM 1776 TO 1876.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN:—

The nation halts, after a march of a hundred years, to number its trophies, to measure its progress. All that was mortal has gone down into the tomb of the past. But the muse of history has guarded with jealous devotion the unfading fame of the fathers, and confided to their children all that is worthy of emulation. We receive the scroll richly enameled with historic names—names that shall ever be associated with all that is sublime and enduring in our American institutions. The deeds of patriotism; the acts of high daring; the intrepid devotion to the truth, and the incomparable humanity set opposite these names—all that they accomplished is a rich legacy to every loyal heart that beats upon this continent. It is interesting to us, and invaluable to the generations that shall soon stand where we stand.

"Oh! checkered train of years, farewell,
With all thy strifes and hopes and fears;
But with us let thy memories dwell,
To warn and teach the coming years."

We listen with rapt attention to the men who shared the perils incident to the founding of our government. We follow with reverence the pen of the poet and historian who have sung and recorded the heroism of the fathers of '76. We trace in the cold marble the sublime ideas that

have added glory and luster to our puissant republic. The valor of the fathers, their endurance, humanity, love of country, love of God, were the weapons of their holy warfare. We receive from the hands of time the rich and delicious fruit they reaped upon this new continent in the West, to be transmitted as well as enjoyed—handed down to the latest generation.

There is nothing immortal but truth. The good that men do lives after them, and is not interred with their mortal bodies. The monuments we erect to the mighty dead must yield under the blighting hand of time. The generations that made pilgrimages to the shrines of saints and heroes have long since ended their wanderings upon the shore of time, and the places that held the ashes of those whom they venerated are now desecrated by the iron hoof of a swift and remorseless civilization. Xerxes wept at the thought that magnificent and stupendous as his army was, one hundred years would not spare a single man. He erred on the side of a purely materialistic idea. Sheer physical existence is not the sum of human endeavor.

“ Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
‘ Life is but an empty dream !
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

“ Life is real ! Life is earnest !
And the grave is not ~~its~~ goal ;
‘ Dust thou art, to dust returnest,’
Was not spoken of the soul.

“ Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way ;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

" In the world's broad field of battle,
 In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
 Be a hero in the strife!

" Lives of great men all remind us
 We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
 Footprints on the sands of time."

The fathers did not struggle for their own existence *only*. They were nerved by a broad conception of their duty to after-coming generations. They were inspired with an idea that while it had its roots in the exigencies of the times in which they lived, lifted up, and extended its fruit and branches into a more propitious future to o'ershade and strengthen their successors. We reap what they sowed; eat the fruit upon which we bestowed no labor. They fought for rights God-given, and built this government upon principles as broad as the universe. They gave us a government of the people, by the people, for the people—the people governing—a republic that should not perish from the earth. How well they have done this work, orators, statesmen, clergymen, poets, and journalists, are to-day informing us in measured sentences, rounded periods, and exuberant rhetoric. And our children will judge, one hundred years hence, whether we have kept pure and inviolable the principles the men of '76 formulated to law.

We climb to the summit of dizzy thought and national excellence. We level our glasses upon the battle-ground of the century, and evoke a critical and considerate judgment upon what has been accomplished for and by the nation—more, for mankind.

The events of the century move before us in all the magnificence of panoramic grandeur and rapidity. Lexington,

Concord, Bunker Hill, Ticonderoga, Trenton, and Independence Hall, have become the great centers of national thought and feeling. They are designated by the muse of history as the shrines at which patriots may worship, to kindle anew their devotion. We put aside our political creeds, and find ourselves no longer consumed by partisan animosities, or biased by sectional grudges. We converge to a common center; we meet upon equal grounds. The shafts of calumny fall from unwilling hands, and we wave the olive-branch of peace. This national holiday, this Sabbath of the nation finds us all Americans. The heart of the republic is swelling with high sentiments and deep gratitude, while the representatives of the civilized world bear to us congratulations and friendly greetings.

But, in these moments of popular exaltation and triumph, we are liable to lose the spirit in the letter, the substance in the shadow. Intoxicated with national joy, we may forget to ask ourselves how far we are from Plymouth Rock, Bunker Hill, and Independence Hall! Are our institutions resting upon the impregnable foundations laid by the wisdom and foresight of the fathers; or have we removed them to the shifting sands of political opinion? It is the work of this hour to trace the threads of revolutionary purpose; to lay bare the motives of the fathers in bringing to this continent a free nation. We must analyze the character of our institutions; judge the spirit and texture of our laws. Let us see if these are just—whether they comport with the hopes cherished a hundred years ago. Let us see whether the American Negro has been a help or a hinderance; a blessing or a curse to this republic.

1620 to 1776.

American slavery had its birth simultaneous with the landing of the Mayflower. As an institution, it reaches beyond, anterior to the American State; as a blessing and a curse, they have walked through this new land of promise in the west. Freedom, as a fair young lady with lithe limbs, gladsome face, and flowing tresses, has been espied in her beneficent march from the golden sands of the Pacific to the orange and palm of Florida. We have seen her coming o'er the brow of majestic mountains, through the golden harvests of the west, through the sugar-cane and rice, with her locks emersed with the dew of the mountain, and her garments perfumed with the lily of the valley. But, as we have watched her in her glorious march, we have discerned the dark specter slavery at her side, with his lean, lank arm locked in hers; and wherever his dark shadow has fallen, there have been degradation and death. From Jamestown and Plymouth Rock they began their companionship, which soon ripened into a friendship based upon the relations of trade and capital. But fair Freedom soon found out that her health and life were imperiled by this companionship; and habit had rendered severance almost impossible. Only after a fierce struggle was Freedom enabled to free herself, to divorce herself from slavery; and with disheveled locks, bleeding limbs, pale cheek, languid eye, and aching heart, she is to-day conscious of the imminent danger in which she placed herself and her votaries, when stepping from the deck of the noble Mayflower; she, without meditation, accepted the wooings of the inhuman Cavalier of Jamestown.

Such, in brief, is the story of Freedom and Slavery. But let us particularize. The Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock on the 22d of December, 1620, and in the

same year a brig that had seen better days, manned by Dutch seamen, landed twenty slaves at Jamestown, Virginia. This was the beginning of the nefarious traffic in human beings. The prisons of Europe were emptied of the worst elements of society, to be employed in the slave trade, while every unseaworthy vessel was immediately brought into requisition. The vilest, most ignorant elements of France, Spain, and Portugal engaged in the trade. And before 1650 the seas were covered with the greatest curse that ever afflicted the earth. The southern colonies were populated rapidly, and slavery spread through all the settlements, both North and South.

It was found that in 1791, when the first census was taken, that there were 40,370 slaves in the northern colonies and 653,910 in the southern.

In Massachusetts, and in almost every New England State, slaves were held, bought, sold, and advertised as beasts.

In 1710 the Rev. Samuel Phillips drew up a marriage formulary designed especially for slaves in Massachusetts, headed "*Negro Marriage*." It concludes as follows: "For you must both of you bear in mind that you remain still, as really and truly as ever, your master's property, and therefore it will be justly expected, both by God and man, that you behave and conduct yourselves as obedient and faithful servants," etc.

At this time New York had about 1,500 negro and Indian slaves. They were neglected in almost every particular. Their marriages were by common consent, without the officiating presence of the ministers, or the consent of the church. When sick, they were not visited, and when they died, were denied the blessing of a Christian burial, and thrown into a common ditch. They were left

in the deepest ignorance and vice, and knew but one thing —toil.

Thus neglected and abused, the early slaves were determined to throw off the yoke. The first attempt at insurrection was made in New York, in 1712, when, if it had not been for the promptness and firmness of the military, the city would have been razed to the ground. Another such attempt was made in South Carolina, in 1720. It was a street fight. Troops were raised by the authorities, and many of the slaves captured and executed.

This spirit found its way into Virginia. In December, 1722, three hundred slaves, near the Rappahannock river, armed themselves with the determination to murder the whites as they came from church. Their plan was discovered, and a terrible slaughter averted *only* through the most speedy and severe measures.

Massachusetts slaves were no strangers to the widespread and righteous desire to be free. They rose there with such decisiveness, patriotism, and valor that on the 18th of April, 1723, the Rev. Joseph Sewall preached a sermon on "*The late fires yt have broken out in Boston, supposed to be purposely set by ye Negroes.*" And the selectmen of the town of Boston made a report on the following Monday, consisting of nineteen articles, of which this is the ninth: "That if more than two Indians, negro, or mulatto servants or slaves be found in the streets or highways in or about the town, idling or lurking together, unless in the service of their master or employer, every one so found shall be punished at the house of correction." I could devote the whole day to a history of the slave insurrections in the colonies, north and south; but suffice it to say that no State that held slaves was passed by in these moments of resentment and the rising of the immortal in man that will not be chained! The time soon came when

the outside pressure caused the people of the northern colonies to see that their political interests—yea, their very existence, could be best conserved in the relaxation of the severe censorship exercised over the slaves, which had driven them to the very verge of successful rebellion. Massachusetts led the way in this, as proven by her subsequent history, in every good cause. Listen to her in the following:

“The general court conceiving themselves bound by the first opportunity to bear witness against the heinous and crying sin of man-stealing, as also to prescribe such a law for the future as may sufficiently deter all others belonging to us to have to do in such vile and odious courses, justly abhorred by all good and just men, do order that negro interpreters, with all others unlawfully taken, be by the first opportunity, at the charge of the country for the present, sent to their native country, and a letter with them of the indignation of the court thereabouts, and justice thereof, desiring our honored governor would please put this order in execution.”

This had a tendency to diminish the importation of slaves into New England, and to soothe and comfort the wounded spirit of the colored people in the east.

1770 to 1812.

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It was now 1770. It was evident that the struggle between the colonies and the mother country was at hand. English troops were in our harbors, upon our rivers, in the streets of the seaboard cities. Boston heard the first gun of the revolution, and gave, as her first martyr, a brave negro. On the 5th of March, 1770, the British soldiers marched into King street, known now as State. Their presence incensed the citizens, and a crowd, led by Crispus Attucks, a negro, advanced upon the troops. Attucks

shouted to his followers: "The way to get rid of these soldiers, is to attack the main guard; strike at the root; this is the nest!" And at the same time he rushed fearlessly upon the English led by Captain Preston. Attucks was killed at the first fire, and Samuel Gray and Jonas Caldwell fell at his side. Samuel Marwick and Patrick Carr were mortally wounded. Thus began the great revolution, of which Webster says: "From that moment we may date the severance of the British Empire." Excitement ran at high tide. The patriotism of the people found fit expression in speeches and resolutions; and amid the ringing of bells and booming of cannon, soldiers were enrolled to protect the liberties of the colonists, both religious and political.

Three days after the fight, the martyrs were buried with great pomp and solemnity. All the stores were closed, and business of every kind suspended. The body of Crispus Attucks, the negro slave, was laid in Faneuil Hall, and all the bodies were followed by a procession with columns six deep, closed up by a long line of the carriages of the most respectable citizens of Boston. The four bodies were interred in one grave, marked by a stone bearing the following:

" Long as in freedom's cause the wise contend,
Dear to your country shall your fame extend;
While to the world the lettered stone shall tell,
Where Caldwell, Attucks, Gray, and *Mavorick* fell."

Notwithstanding the servile condition of the negroes in the eastern colonies, they imbibed a spirit of liberty, and became the loyal and trusted allies of the fathers. And there is no battle-field, from Bunker Hill to New Orleans, where he did not nobly do his part. To take the negro out of the history of the Revolution, is to rob it of one of its most at-

tractive and indispensable elements; it is to impoverish it by the withdrawal of some of its most wealthy and enduring facts. In short, the negro is an integral part of revolutionary history.

One of the first men who gave up their lives in the battle of Lexington was a colored man. Major Pitcairn, the very incarnation of British hostilities, who led the charge on the redoubts at Bunker Hill, was killed by a negro named Salem. Bancroft says, concerning the colored soldiers at Bunker Hill:

“Nor should history forget to record that, as in the army at Cambridge, so also in this gallant band the free negroes of the colonies had their representatives; for the right of free negroes to bear arms in the public defense was, at that day, as little disputed in New England as their other rights. They took their place, not in a separate corps, but in the ranks with the white men; and their names may be read on the pension-rolls of the country, side by side with those of other soldiers of the Revolution.” This is the verdict of our great American historian.

In the battle of Red Bank and in the battle of R. I., negro soldiers bore a glorious part. Major-General Prescott, of British fame, was captured on the 9th of July, 1777, by a negro soldier named Prince. On the 14th of May, 1781, Colonel Green, of the American army was surprised and killed by the British near Point’s Bridge, N. Y. His colored soldiers were cut to pieces in defending him, and would not retreat under any circumstances. The historian Arnold says of this colored regiment:

“A third time the enemy, with desperate courage and increased strength, attempted to assail the redoubt, and would have carried it but for the timely aid of two Continental battalions, dispatched by Sullivan to support his almost exhausted troops. It was in repelling these furious

onsets that the newly raised black regiment, under Colonel Green, distinguished itself by deeds of desperate valor. Posted behind a thicket in the valley, they three times drove the Hessians, who charged repeatedly down the hill to dislodge them ; and so determined were the enemy in these successive charges that the day after the battle the Hessian colonel, upon whom this duty had devolved, applied to exchange his command and go to New York, because he dared not lead his regiment again into battle, lest his men should shoot him for having caused them so much loss."

Such in brief, is the history of the black man in the war in the colonies. He needs nothing at my feeble hands, when men better fitted, abler and wiser than myself, have given him a proud place in the early history of the nation, struggling for a free and untrammeled existence. We see the glory of the American negroes' warfare, hovering over the fields of strife, from which the student of history may catch inspiration and enthusiasm. And if any class of people in our composite nationality have claims upon the Union, if any class of people, after the puritan, can justly claim a part in establishing the colonies as independent States, it is the American negro ! If any portion of the people, 40,000,000 of people, can claim the protection of the American flag, it is the American negro ! We stand here to-day to challenge the devotion of the adopted sons of America ; we care not whether they come from England or Ireland, Germany or France ; from the snows of Russia, or from under Italian skies. We claim a loyalty to American ideas, institutions, manners, progress, and liberty, second only to Americans themselves ! The devotion, valor, and patriotism of the negro soldiers of '76, is indeed a rich bequest to their children ; and,

"On Fame's eternal camping ground
Their silent tents are spread;
While glory guards with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead."

1812 TO 1863—THE COLORED AMERICAN IN THE WAR OF 1812.

The superior manhood and sterling soldierly qualities so clearly evinced by the negro, had won for him golden opinions both in America and England. The British army had ample reason to remember his promptness and severity in battle; while the best classes in both sections of the country had come to regard him with sentiments of high esteem and appreciation. Those who afore time doubted his humanity and capacity, now acknowledged him as an element of strength in the colony.

But we come to the war of 1812. The same spirit which distinguished the negro soldier in the early struggles of the colonies, intensified by the gratitude bestowed upon him, lifted him into conspicuous notice in this hour of trial. In every section of the country he was found among the patriotic young men who were rallying under the national standard. In many instances, the slave, as well as the free colored man, arrayed himself among the defenders of the country.

On the 21st day of September, 1814, Major General Andrew Jackson issued an official document from the headquarters of the seventh military district at Mobile, addressed to the free colored people of Louisiana. The following sentences will show the character of the document: "As sons of freedom, you are now called upon to defend our most inestimable blessings. As Americans, your country looks with confidence to her adopted children for a valorous support, as a faithful return for the advantages enjoyed under her mild and equitable government. As fathers, husbands, and brothers, you are summoned to rally around

the standard of the eagle, to defend all which is dear in existence."

It is not necessary to say that these men responded to the call. From the parishes of Placquemines, Jefferson, St. Charles, St. Mary, St. John, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Bernard, St. Martin, and from every town and city in Louisiana, they came to the defense of the State—of the country. They were capable of the severest discipline and the hardiest soldierhood, and no troops were more valiant and efficient than these negro soldiers. I prefer to refer you to Bancroft's chapter on the Battle of New Orleans, but desire to quote from the report of General Jackson, and his speech to the colored soldiers after the war: "Soldiers! When, on the banks of the Mobile, I called you to take up arms, inviting you to partake of the perils and glory of your white fellow-citizens, I expected much from you, for I was not ignorant that you possessed qualities most formidable to an invading enemy. I knew with what fortitude you could endure hunger and thirst, and all the fatigues of a campaign. I knew well how you loved your native country, and that you, as well as ourselves, had to defend what man holds most dear—his parents, wife, children, and property. You have done more than I expected. In addition to the previous qualities I before knew you to possess, I found among you a noble enthusiasm, which leads to the performance of great things.

"Soldiers! The President of the United States shall hear how praiseworthy was your conduct in the hour of danger, and the representatives of the American people will give you the praise your exploits entitle you to. Your general anticipates them in applauding your noble ardor."

Praise, in such terms, and from such a source, renders eulogy superfluous. It comes not from the pen of a biased

historian, nor from the note-book of a prejudiced correspondent, but from the lips of the inflexible old warrior, who had often tried them in the melting flames of battle, and, therefore, knew what he spake, and could testify to what he had seen.

We may cast a proud glance over the battlefield of 1812. And we will find that there is not a single spot lighted with the glory of military achievement; not an inch of ground consecrated to manhood, loyalty, and freedom, but what is familiar with the transcendent valor and the incomparable fidelity of the negro soldier. The testimony of General Jackson is the opinion of their white fellow-soldiers, and the verdict of the history of those times.

THE RELATION OF THE COLORED SOLDIER TO THE TRIUMPH OF OUR NATIONAL ARMS IN THE SLAVEHOLDER'S REBELLION.

If you had asked an anti-slavery man thirty years ago how the slave question would be settled, he would have most confidently answered, "By compromise, legislation, without shedding one drop of blood."

There were only a few men who believed that the question would have to be settled by the sword. But not even the most prophetic of them thought that the negro, who was so degraded, would play so conspicuous a part in the bloody drama. The South was lulled into repose by its wealth and heartlessness; was confident she was safe from the bitterness of that mean little sect called "Abolitionists;" while, on the other hand, the North was trying to gloss over her conscience; trying to find neutral ground; trying to maintain amicable relations between the trade of the South and the capital of the North, at the expense of human beings in the shape of chattel goods.

The South was determined to retain the negro in bondage, while the North was willing she should do so.

The North did not care to soil her spotless hands in the slave traffic, did not care to be partaker of the sins of the South; but from her heart she indorsed the terrible crime, and by her laws and armed forces drove the fugitive back to the hell of slavery. Let no one here think that I am come to fan the flame of sectional animosity, or that I am willingly or viciously reproducing the troublesome times and struggles, which are now, happily, in the process of time, consigned to the sepulchre of the past.

I am not to lift from the grave of the past the dead monster—slavery; not to carry your minds back to the haunts of oppressed innocence and truth led into captivity; where millions groaned; where hope and piety, love and fear, watched and labored, wept and prayed; but I am to pay a just tribute to the negro soldier.

The prophetic voices of Lincoln and Seward had announced the awful truth, that “Slavery and Union” could not exist together. Freedom and bondage were diametrically opposed to each other. They could not be friends; one only could exist at the sacrifice of the other.

The antagonism of these two ideas was apparent, but who would acknowlege it? For a time slavery seemed to recede; the air was filled with a death-like silence, and the elements were charged with the thunders of secession. Then the monster came creeping back to avenge old and inveterate grudges, with all their long arrears of hate; to revive and exaggerate obsolete abuses; to trample down, not only the negro, but the rights of puritanic sons, and if possible to call the slave-roll under the shadow of Bunker Hill Monument, venerable shaft that marks a period in American Independence, and the spot where rests the dust of Massachusett's liberty-loving sons!

At length the lightning flashed the news from State to State. The bloody struggle began. The North declared

her intention of maintaining the "Union" at any cost. On her escutcheon was written in burning letters, "*The union as it is?*"

What did this mean? It meant that it indorsed slavery; that it wanted the South to retain her bondmen; the only objection being, that the South, geographically, ought not to extend slavery. But at the same time a Southerner could bring his slave upon free soil and not forfeit his right to him! The fires of the hell of slavery could no longer be confined within a prescribed geographical limit. They burst forth in all their fury! At the beginning of the war it was avowedly stated throughout the country that it was not a black man's but a white man's war; that the negro had no part or lot in it. An apathy had seized the conscience of the North, and a bribe had closed her eyes. She failed to see that slavery was the cause of the conflict, and that except slavery was welcomed to the bosom of the North or entirely extirpated, there could be no peace. From Bull Run to Gettysburg our army met with signal defeat. Her ranks were thinned by the enemy's bullets, and wasted under a Southern sun, while victory perched upon the banner of the Confederacy. An hundred thousand northern sons had perished, for what they did not know! The country was weak from loss of blood; her treasury was empty; English bankers buttoned up their pockets and in silence prayed that "Babylon" might not fall. But "He who was for us, was more than they all who were against us!" First, conditions of peace were offered. If the South would only lay down her arms, she could retain her property in human beings.

The North told her that she did not care for her slaves; but the South was determined not to be soothed by soft promises. She wanted more territory, that she might lay the foundations of her institution broader and deeper.

Then the *Emancipation Proclamation* came, not as an edict of humanity, but as a war measure—a means by which to save the *Union*, not the *slave*. The advent of the negro soldier was in a time when the national life was in imminent danger.

Columbia was weak from loss of blood, and her war-eagles wearily flapped their wings in the blood-dampened dust of the nation. It was not that the country had come to see the wrong of slavery; it was not that she was willing to loose the yoke of bondage which had so long galled the negro's neck, but it was that emancipation was *an absolute necessity*. Since it was necessary to free the negro, it became also necessary to arm him, and solicit his aid in overturning the institution that had, for so long, injured him in body and in soul. By the irresistible force of the logic of the nation's position, she was led to enroll the negro under the "stars and stripes." He was no longer a chattel, but a human being; no longer a bondman, he was a freeman, with the weapon of civil warfare in his remorseless hand. The Confederate army, urged on by a series of brilliant victories, was upon northern soil—at the gate of our national capital, and in our harbors and rivers. Their victories had nerved them for the conflict; and the idea that a bondman was to meet them as an equal on the field, fanned their anger to white heat. This was a moment of triumph to the Confederacy. They were recruited, fresh, sanguine; while, on the other hand, the Federal army was alternating between defeat and victory, hope and fear. At this critical period, the negro soldier advanced to the front with firm and steady tread, keeping time to the music of a righteous desire to purchase his own freedom at the cannon's mouth, in the battle-front. The nation was breathless! Our army was awe-struck, while the whole civilized world watched with peculiar interest the movements of these

bondmen in blue. It was whispered in society, it was discussed in councils, it was asked by the press: "Will the negro fight?" "Won't he run if a white man looks at him?" These and a hundred other questions were asked. But who can answer? Oh, that I had the voice of Niagara, the eloquence of an angel, and were as tall as the Alleghanies, that I might reply to the whole world! But is this necessary? Have not Port Hudson, Fort Wagoner, Fort Pillow, Olustee, Honey Hill, Petersburg, Richmond, Appomattox, and a hundred other well-fought and well-won battle-fields, their voices? If it were necessary, I could detail, could recount some of their greatest battles. For he who speaks bears honorable scars received in the battles for the republic! But already the historian has dipped his pen in yonder burning orb, and written in letters of gold all over the nation's history: "*The colored troops fought bravely.*"

The tide was changed, and "the armies of the aliens were turned to flight." The wave of rebellion was rolled back, the enemy was defeated at every point, and victory perched upon our banner. The negro, who yesterday swung his scythe so lustily, was now wielding the sword of liberty, while the master who but yesterday marked his back, was flying before him. What a wonderful change! The world could hardly believe its eyes. Northerners and Southerners were alike surprised. The negro had accomplished two things. He had swept away the bitter prejudice of the Northern army, and convinced the Southern soldier that he was his equal in arms, and dangerous as a piece of property. From the moment the negro appeared in the conflict, until Appomattox echoed the victory, there was not one single defeat to be recorded against us. The series of victories was unbroken, without a space between. It was step after step, until our national arms had penetrated every Southern state, and until in every Southern city the "stars and bars" were hauled down, and the "stars and stripes" hauled up. *It*

was the advent of the colored soldier that brought victory to our national arms. It was his valuable service, when the nation was exhausted and fainting, that saved our national honor and overthrew the slave oligarchy. This is the relation the negro soldier of this country sustained to the victories of our national arms. And no impartial historian will ever pass by this fact, for,

"It shall flash through coming ages,
It shall light the distant years;"

And a grateful republic will remember that its most precious stones were cemented by the blood of her negro soldiers, whose devotion to the flag was deathless, and whose fame will never fade.

THE NEGRO SOLDIER'S PLACE IN HISTORY.

A man is never honored for what another does for him or makes him. The man who performs the act of charity or humanity is praised, not the one for whom the act is performed. Men are not to be praised because Christ died for them, but Christ is to be praised because he died for men. Had the *Emancipation Proclamation* been issued because the government had reached those moral grounds on which it felt it necessary, from a force of conscience, to free the slave, then the negro would have been placed under undying gratitude to the government. But it was not so. And if the war had continued for years, and if the Federal arms had triumphed, and if the negro had been set free without himself firing a gun, to whom would the praise of deliverance belong? Not to the negro, but to the government.

I am grateful that the war did not end in this manner. I thank that wise Being, with whom there is no conjecture, no accident, no chance, that he ordained that victory should

come alone at the point of the negroes' bayonet. It is not ours alone to praise, but to be praised, that the country is cleansed of plague, that bloodshed is staunched, that peace and plenty crown our land, and that the two sections of our country are brought together in indivisible fellowship.

The anti-slavery society did much to sever the bondman's chain; the Republican party did its share too; but neither one nor both of them unlocked the prison door or set the bondman free. It was the divinity of the decree that "*all men are free and equal*," in the soul of the negro soldier that made this country forever free. No party or sect can claim the honor of liberating the negro. No historian dare write that four and one-half millions of slaves in the United States were set free by this or that society, and lifted in the arms of government to the dizzy height of citizenship. But, on the other hand, the muse of history will record, that when the slave institution was rocking with its living freight; when it had poisoned the life blood of liberty, and seduced the North; when it had precipitated civil war, wasted our army, and emptied our national treasury, and when the life of our nation hung upon the thread of uncertainty, the slave threw down his hoe, took up his musket, and saved the country.

Such is the decree of history; such the negro's place in history. It was impossible for the anti-slavery society to educate the Southern conscience. History proves it to be a failure. Luther failed to reform the clergy; Vincent Oge, failed to move the inhuman assembly of St. Domingo. So Garrison and Sumner failed to convince the slave-holding South that slavery was wrong. But as soon as the common people heard the "*Battle-cry of freedom*," they rallied for the conflict. It was no longer a struggle among the upper classes, but a common warfare, for a common cause,

where all were brothers, whose watch-word was "*humanity.*"

History can never wink at this important period in our republic. The negro soldier occupies as important a place in history as any class of men who ever fought for liberty. The white soldier will be praised because he defended his liberty; the negro soldier will be praised because, having no liberty, he purchased it by the sword in the great struggle of justice against oppression. It will ever be the glory¹ of the black man's government in Hayti that he built it on the ruins of slavery, and ratified its benign and humane principles with his own blood.

Neither France nor England can glory in that they freed St. Domingo; but the negro can boast that he threw off his own yoke, drove his oppressors from the island, conquered the skilled soldiery of England and France, and built his own government upon the rock of human justice and equal rights—a government that has stood during the present century, and will stand through the ages to come! And it will ever be the glory of the colored people of this country that they unlocked their own prison-house; that they saved the "*Union*;" and that they purchased their citizenship with all its immunities; that they tore down the walls of the slave institution; that they built a new government upon the broken shackles of four and one-half millions of slaves. This is the negro's place in history—his own deliverer, the defender of the Union. And when the history of this country is written in truth—when Freedom counts her jewels and reviews her glorious army of martyrs—the negro will be there.

" And there came the nameless dead—the men
Who perished in fever-swamp and fen,
The slowly starved of the prison-pen ;

And, marching beside the others
 Came the dusky martyrs of Pillow's fight,
 With limbs enfranchised and bearing bright;
 I thought—perhaps 't was the pale moonlight—
 They looked as white as their brothers!"

The command from Jehovah to Pharoah was simply "*to let His people go.*" If they had been taken from Egypt to Canaan without any effort of their own, they would never have appreciated their deliverance. Their long and weary marches; their fierce and bloody struggles; their defeats and victories only made them appreciate the land of freedom when they were permitted to reach it. Through Abraham Lincoln the Lord said to the South, "*Let my people go;*" but the way of deliverance lay through fields of strife and rivers of blood. There could have been no more trying and perilous times than those through which the country was passing when the slave was emancipated: but the negro soldier was equal to the emergencies.

The years intervene and stretch their busy lengths between loathsome prisons and deadly conflicts; but across the space come the groans of the tortured, and agonies of the dying. The sacred feelings and sanctified memories of this hour should be cherished with all the fondness of liberty-loving men. May our ears be open to the voices of this occasion. May our sluggish consciences be quickened by a sense of duty which the living owe the dead. Let us remember that our fallen heroes have left to us a large legacy of love that is not to be bartered away. Let us ever cherish their memory and honor their valor. Let us keep inviolate the trusts committed to our keeping as American citizens, and guard with undying devotion the great principles of liberty and equality which they ratified with their blood. Thus this country will comport with the germinal idea of its founders—"*all men will be free and equal.*"

THE RELATION OF THE NEGRO TO THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY.

In the late war the negro proved himself an able and efficient soldier. By the ponderous and incessant blows of his battle-ax of liberty he opened the gate to social, political, and religious relations and activities. Slavery had closed all these gates against him; these relations lay beyond the boundaries of the cruel institution in the fair land of freedom. But the moment the negro enrolled under the "*stars and stripes*" he began an existence hitherto unknown to him. He took a part in a drama that was not to end in a war of arms, but in a war of ideas and principles, in which war he was to take on his characteristics as a freeman, not as a slave; as a civilian, not as a soldier. The world has blindly ascribed qualities to the negro slave that will not belong to him as an educated citizen; and would as readily belong to any other class of men in the same condition as the American slave was before the war. But the time is come when the test is being applied. It remains to be seen what the negro will be. The war was only an initiatory step. It was then that four and one-half millions of human beings came up out of the Egypt of bondage to begin their march of citizenship. Before them lie the fields of science and learning, and the plains of culture invite their weary feet. Some have thought the war ended, the victories all won; but the struggle begun in the ditches of Pillow and on the parapets of Wagner, under the eyes of the whole civilized world, is still going on. It has been extended into the common school, where ignorance is to be conquered and superstition vanquished.

Into the temple of God, and into the halls of Congress, this struggle, this conflict is pushed. The battle between conscience and passion; between selfishness and benevolence; between slothfulness and duty; all these battles

are to be waged with all the vehemence of manly effort. For we must remember that the victories won in war are conditioned to us on the ground of our success in conquering in moral conflicts. We have not a moment to spare. The heat of the battle is now ; so let every man be at his post. The world is watching and waiting for results. I am indeed glad that slavery is dead. Its ghost will no longer render our land hideous. Slavery is dead! But, the evil influences of the institution linger among us. Its impress was made upon the souls as well as upon the bodies of its subjects. It will take years before this country will outgrow the scars of slavery. The government is yet weak from the fierce and protracted struggle; but time will close and heal every wound; she will yet be strong in truth and justice.

This is the formative period of our race. We will be susceptible to many impressions, and it, therefore, becomes us to know just what kind of material we are putting into our characters. Every thing we do now will go into history, whether good or bad. If we fail to be industrious and virtuous, the future historian will record it. He will write that after the negro was free, instead of becoming industrious, he became indolent; instead of becoming wiser, he became more ignorant; turning liberty into license, his last state was worse than the former. Ah!, fellow Christians, I wish I could write the language of my heart in plainer letters! I wish I could tell you in articulate words, how much I love you, and how *anxious* I am that my race march on until it takes its place by the side of ancient Greece and classic Rome; yea, even by the side of England and proud America! You may think me a fanatic to-day, but fifty years hence, when our race has taken on a national character, its panegyrist will call this no idle dream. The avenues that lead to the several professions, to moral and

political eminence, are open and invite you to push along their wide and pleasant way. Virtue, intelligence, wealth and honor are to be sought after ; they will not come to you : you must go to them. It is to be remembered we live in a Republic ; a government that bestows honors and gifts upon all who are faithful and industrious. A man brings no titles in this government ; he must win them if he would have them. He may come of purest blood and be the wealthiest man in the land, or, he may come from the meanest stock, and be the poorest man in the land, and yet sit in the Presidential chair. It is the glory of this government that the ignorant may become intelligent, the poor wealthy, and the obscure the most prominent and illustrious of its officers. Before the war we were circumscribed by geographical, social, and religious limitations, to say nothing of the political and intellectual. These limitations are now removed, and every sphere of action will be limited only by the amount of intelligence and energy that a man carries into it. The great universal law of progress should carry each man along the line of his own inclinations and genius. He should be a law unto himself. He should study to know what nature has adapted him for, and then throw all his energy into that one calling. The man dignifies the place, not the place the man. Every man is to say what he will be in life. Whether he will be saint or sinner ; good or bad ; honored or despised, all is with him ; he is his own master. I look upon our victories during war as a signal for victory in every department of human life ; in religion, in science, and in politics.

If those who have passed with the century could open their eyes upon the country to-day, with negroes in our national Congress, at the head of banks, moneyed corporations, schools of distinction, and in all the walks of life, they would consider the blessings we enjoy commensurate

with the sacrifice they made. When we think of the progress we have made during the last decade it seems like a dream. And yet, when we turn our eyes toward the hill to which we are journeying, the distance looks almost infinite.

“On, then, my brothers! every blow
Ye deal is felt the wide earth through.”

If we love the true, the beautiful, and the good, we must toil for them; we must pay the price. Life means action; progress, work. There is no half-way house between the cradle and the grave. It is one grand march from the time we are born until we die. Only at the river of eternity are we permitted to lay down our burdens. We are moving on to that mountain on which, in the latter days, all nations shall stand, no longer separated by blood, language, or previous condition of servitude. Those who are strangers in the flesh shall embrace each other in tears of gladness, and our brotherhood shall be bound by cords of redeeming love. Those dusky men who so proudly bore aloft the flag of the Union in the hottest of the conflict of the century will be there. Let us seek to overthrow injustice and fraud of every kind; to help build our new government, dedicated to human freedom and equal rights, upon the rock of our common humanity. Let us guard with zeal the purity of its principles. Let us defend the sacredness of its stars and stripes, that ensign of liberty and union known only to be loved in all countries and climes under the heavens; then this indeed will become

“The land of the free, and the home of the brave.”

THE RELATION OF THE NEGRO TO THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTURY.

Every class of the American people have had ample opportunity for educating themselves, except the colored people. In a white child, of whatsoever nationality, a desire for culture was looked upon as a virtue; but in a negro child, both as a vice and a crime. The one had a prize set before him to incite him to intelligent growth; while the other had a penalty held over him to excite him and drive him into deeper ignorance. Hence the illiteracy of the American negro.

But notwithstanding these severe and unjust strictures, the century holds forth to our astonished vision, literary representatives of the negro race—men and women of genius and taste.

Phillis Wheatley was perhaps the earliest person of letters among the negroes of the Massachusetts' colony. She was captured in childhood, and brought from the west coast of Africa to the slave market at Boston, in 1761, some time before the Revolution. She was purchased by one Mrs. John Wheatley, from whom she received her name. She was between the years of seven and eight, delicately built, and suffering from a long sea-voyage.

The intelligence of the child, together with her modest bearing, attracted the attention and won the sympathy of Mrs. Wheatley, and she purchased her. A short time soon revealed the uncommon intelligence and aptness of this little slave. Her mistress began to take a deep interest in her; she taught her the English language, which she soon acquired, and to which, at her landing, she was a total stranger.

Her mind was so tenacious, so quick, and intuitional, that it was thought advisable to give her the benefit of the

schools. She was a faithful and assiduous student, and always had her lessons perfect. Her mistress no longer regarded her as a servant, but as a companion; and some of the best educated people of Boston took her as an associate. She was always an important figure in the drawing-room and at dinner parties.

She steadily advanced in the public favor, and her ripening womanhood fulfilled the promises of her childhood. She made herself proficient in the Latin language, and translated one of Ovid's tales. It was published in Boston, and met a large sale. In the same year it was issued in London, receiving the highest encomiums of the British reviews.

She published a neat volume of her poems, containing thirty-nine pieces, in 1773, in London. It was dedicated to the Countess of Huntingdon, and on the first pages of the volume was a document, signed by the Governor and Lieutenant-governor of Massachusetts, her owner, and fifteen of the most influential and literary persons of Boston. The volume had a rapid and extensive sale. Mr. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the poet, once told me himself that she sent one of her poems to General Washington, which called forth a letter from the old soldier, speaking in terms of highest praise. Mr. Longfellow told me that he looked upon her as a person of admirable culture.

She was manumitted when twenty-one years of age, and immediately sailed for England. On her arrival in London, she was received with pomp and ceremony; was welcomed into the best English society, and was much sought after by the savants of Europe. Her poems were now collected and published, with a portrait and memoir of the poetess. After spending nearly five years in England, she returned to this country, and married Dr. Peters, of Philadelphia, a colored gentleman of reputation and culture.

But her health had been failing rapidly, and she soon died, leaving a large circle of friends and admirers to mourn her early and lamented death.

No colored man is acquainted with the history of his race in this country who is not familiar with the record of Benjamin Banneker, the scholar, the philanthropist, and the astronomer. No negro figures so conspicuously in the history of the last century as Banneker.

He was born in Maryland, in 1732. His parents were pure negroes, one of whom had been sold into slavery. The mother secured the freedom of her husband, and purchasing a few acres of land, settled down in her own home. Their son, Benjamin, was a bright and intelligent boy, and early gave evidence of superior mental capacity. He was sent by his parents to the school established for the children of free negroes, where he was diligent and successful in all his studies. When fifteen years of age, he had mastered the course prescribed, and, consequently, left school; but continued his studies. One Mr. Geo. Ellicott, a gentleman of fortune and literary taste, became interested in young Banneker, and gave him the privilege of his large and valuable library.

He studied Mayer's Tables, Ferguson's Astronomy, and Leadbeater's Lunar Tables. He obtained some astronomical instruments, which he used admirably.

He had a taste for the languages, and became very efficient in Latin, Greek, German, and French. He paid considerable attention to the classics and general literature. But it was evident that his genius was in the line of mathematics and astronomy. Accordingly, he turned his attention to astronomical observations. He completed a set of calculations for a whole year. He was so successful that he made calculations for the years 1792 to 1795, and published almanacs "exhibiting the different aspects of the

planets, a table of the motions of the sun and moon, their risings and settings, and the courses of the bodies of the planetary system."

His reputation became national, and the ablest scholars of the United States opened up correspondence with him, and sought his society. He was a fine writer, and the celebrated firm of Goddard & Angell, of Baltimore, secured his services for their house, and gladly became the publishers of his almanacs.

He sent one of his almanacs and a letter to Thomas Jefferson, which in itself is a production of literary value. Jefferson responded in an elegant and characteristic vein. The great statesman was so very much pleased with the almanac that he sent it to the distinguished French writer, Brissot, and in his letter referred to Banneker in glowing terms, calling him the "Negro Philosopher."

Just before the French Revolution of 1789, or thereabouts, the "Society of the Friends of the Blacks" was organized by Lafayette, Brissot, Barnave, Condorcet, and Gregoire. The name of Banneker was often upon the lips of these orators of freedom, who used him as an argument in favor of the black race. And in the British House of Commons, Pitt, Wilberforce, and Buxton often referred to him, calling his name, in proof the capacity of the negro.

He was invited by the Maryland commissioners to help lay off the District of Columbia as the national capital, and took a distinguished part in that important work. "He knew every branch of history," says a writer, "both natural and civil; he had read all the original historians of England, France, and Germany, and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, voyages, and travels were all studied and well digested by him. With such a fund of knowledge his conversation was equally interesting, instructive, and entertaining." He was so highly appre-

ciated by the best families of Virginia, that in 1803 he was invited by President Jefferson to visit him at his home in Monticello, where he was spending his vacation.

Banneker fell asleep in 1804, in the midst of his literary labors, at the ripe age of seventy-two, universally beloved and lamented.

But time would fail me to call your attention to such men as James McCune Smith, a graduate of the university at Edinburgh, Scotland; Charles L. Reason, the mathematician; James M^t. Whitfield, the poet; James W. C. Pennington, the theologian; Frederick Douglass, the matchless orator; Dr. William Wells Brown, the erudite historian; Alexander Crummell, the pulpit orator; Daniel A. Payne, the religious philosopher; David Ruggles, the polished writer; Peter H. Clark, the experienced teacher;—Henry H. Garnett, Robert Purvis, Philip A. Bell, William C. Nell, J. Madison Bell, and other distinguished colored men of letters; not to forget such women as Charlotte Forten, Francis E. Harper, Edmonia Lewis, Fanny Jackson, and others.

It is hinted at times that the negro can not compete with the white races; that he can not endure under the highest forms of civilization; that he can not master the intricate and subtle problems of the college curriculum; that he is dying rapidly—more rapidly since he is free, etc. The mercy of silence is too good for that class of fanatical negro-haters, who never found out all of the black man's idiosyncrasies until he got out of their cruel bondage. I point them to the maritime statistics, not only of America, but of Europe, proving beyond conjecture that the negro makes the best sailor! I point them to the living, breathing, disgraceful facts in connection with slavery, that the negro, both sexes, endured fatigue and exposure second only to the brute. I ask the American people to call to remembrance the valor, military skill, and endurance of

the negro in blue! And I ask the many schools, academies, and colleges open to the race, if the negro has not shown the largest capacity for the severest culture. I ask the American Congress, which has listened to the stirring eloquence of Elliott, Cane, Lynch, and others, if the negro is a monkey or a man!

The American negro possesses, in the highest degree, the two most important race-elements—the qualities that fit a people for a long existence, and qualify them for the highest civilization—viz., *courage* and *endurance*!

Daniel O'Connell said to Ireland, “Hereditary bondmen, know ye not, that he who would himself be free, must first strike the blow?” The American negro anticipated O'Connell, when he rose and made the colonies tremble as a leaf when stirred by a winter tempest. And if Germany deserves the praise of mankind for driving the despotic Napoleon to Paris and sending him to St. Helena, so, likewise, the American negro deserves the admiration of the civilized world for melting off his chains in the fires of rebellion, and for helping to establish a free government without a single slave under the folds of its flag!

This is an auspicious moment. We hear the receding footsteps of time echoing adown the century. Our hearts tremble with precious memories of the past: and as we ask, “The fathers, where are they?” our affections take a tighter hold on time; we realize the end of existence.

But we must turn our faces to the future. We have journeyed back over the century in order to find something to stimulate and direct our exertions in the future. What our fathers have done to light up the page of history, we may do in the light of their experience even *better* than they. We have their bright examples to incite us to noble deeds. We have their fame to guard and our own to win.

What our ancestors have accomplished will not entitle us to the regard of future generations. The past can only furnish us with inspiration for the future.

"The crisis presses on us; face to face with us it stands,
 With solemn lips of question, like the sphinx in Egypt's sands !
 This day we fashion destiny, our web of fate we spin ;
 This day for all hereafter choose we holiness or sin ;
 Even now from starry Gerizim, or Ebal's cloudy crown,
 We call the dews of blessing or the bolts of cursing down !"

What will the next century record concerning the negro? We know the past and the present, with their swift tide of events and issues thundering in our ears. We know the trials and heartaches of the past; we are conscious of the duties and struggles of the present. But what prophet here to-day can divine the future and hold up to our vision some auguries of good? I may be considered rash in presuming to predict that the next century in America will produce in the negro race an orator, poet, and musician, not at mediocrity, but artists of transcendent genius! When the emotional element in the negro character shall have been subdued and mellowed into rightful obedience and legitimate service, by an education at once liberal, broad, and thorough, he will be the man of the future!

By faith and hope we look into the future; a propitious future, inviting us to share its duties and enjoy its honors. Forgetting the flesh-pots of Egypt, and leaving the superstitions incident to our bondage beyond the Red Sea of our miraculous deliverance, let us press forward to the promised land. Let us move on with alacrity, while over us is spread a bright sky, and a redolent atmosphere about us, invigorating our lungs and making glad our hearts. We march into the future with joyful anticipation of the immortal work that awaits us. We bid the past an

affectionate adieu, heartily congratulate the present, and joyfully salute the future. And when another hundred years are settled upon the gracious brow of the nation, may it be seen as now, that eternal peace and prosperity shine in her youthful countenance, and cast their healthful beams upon all her adopted sons, irrespective of color or nationality.

